A VOICE FROM THE SILENCE

ANNA B. BENSEL

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A VOICE FROM THE SILENCE

BY

ANNA B. BENSEL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
BISHOP BRENT

BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1917

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DEDICATION

To you, my Father, living now
Within that Paradise of Light,
I bring this tiny sheaf of song, —
My gift of love is yours by right.

Oh, you who loved me so of old!
I know that, somewhere in God's Land,
Your soul will hear my heart's refrain
And stretch to me the blessing-hand.

Above the chasm of the grave
I reach to you this gift of mine;
I fold your name in these, my songs,
And you and Mother there enshrine.

INTRODUCTION

Every production of the human mind and hand, like this volume of verse, has a double value — the intrinsic worth of the finished article as measured by prevailing standards and a relative worth determined by the measure of devotion and effort expended upon it by the author. A beautiful fabric made by a machine, purely to supply a commercial demand, arouses in me far less interest than a less perfect product wrought with infinite pains by the hand of an idealist whose very soul has been woven into its maze of threads. The difference between that which is made by hand and that which is machine made is that the one is so personal that it is alone in the universe, the author himself being without power — and one might add, without desire — to make a single perfect replica, and the other represents a pattern without individuality, incapable of being distinguished from thousands of repetitions made on the same machine with unfailing exactness. You have to dig down among roots and processes

of growth in order to adjudge real values. We are sometimes wakened from indifference to enthusiasm over a work of art by learning, for instance, of the lack of facilities at the command of the workman and the almost insurmountable difficulties in the way of achievement. A rude carving suddenly becomes a masterpiece of skill when we see the clumsy tools which executed it.

For nearly thirty years I have been sitting, so to speak, at the elbow of the author of these poems and know their deep value as measured by the soul which inspired them and the skill with which meagre facilities were utilized. Miss Bensel wrote at first from sheer desire to express herself in conditions where other modes of self-expression were largely closed to her, Shut in since early youth from touch with human society by the profound silence of absolute deafness and by a dimness of sight so great that she is unable to move abroad alone, she has kept her social sympathies active and her inner nature free and true. What would have proved a hopeless handicap to many has been an incentive to her to cultivate the whole area of her slender opportunities. In her last letter to me she says, speaking of one of her poems being set to music: "I shall never hear it — but I am glad." She knows how to be glad through others' gladness.

Her world has been further restricted in that, long years ago, all her nearest and dearest, excepting one member of the family who lives at a distance, were called beyond the grave. Her only companions are the little group of friends who have surrounded her and found happiness and benefit in her society. Alone and in the impenetrable silence of her twilight life she has spun her little web of song. I have such reverence for verse that it is a marvel to me, whenever I listen to a new poet, how it can be done,— this saying things with common words in such a combination as to reveal the unseen and to impart to the mind the ineffable. But when it is done by one whose experience of life has been nearly all in the minor key, it is incomprehensible. Even the skylark demands his dome of blue into which to pour his song. It is only the human singer that can make clouds echo with praise.

Many of the poems of this volume have found their way into print singly in various papers. Though, like all of us who use the pen as a medium of self-expression, the author dreamed of a book, it was not until those who are now her publishers, attracted by one of her poems in a periodical, proposed the printing of this collection, that the dream promised to find realisation in fact.

Speaking for Miss Bensel, I know that a

twofold joy possesses her as she sees her cherished hope taking shape. Hers is the rightful happiness of the laborer who rejoices in seeing his toil bear fruit. No one who has not published a book which represents the travail of his soul can quite understand the kind or degree of joy which thrills the author as his first volume lies open in his hand. It is the joy of maternity. Awe, pride and thankfulness mingle in the author's soul.

Then there is the joy of sharing one's deepest thought with kindred minds. One who, like my friend, yearns to serve society but whose limitations seem to bar the gate to effective service, has the second and larger joy of authorship in full measure. Her shut in life ceases to be shut in. She is really sharing her best, all that she has to give, with the world outside. Her book becomes an artery through which she consciously passes on her experience and vitality to others. It is a brave venture for a sensitive nature to allow men to look in upon one's inmost soul.

I am smiling happily to myself as I write these words which, according to the dictates of my whim, our author will not see until the volume which contains them is placed in her hands. She has no idea what I intend to write. I have not the least intention of consulting her. I count it a privilege to stand

by at the launching of the little book. Its contents reveal character and native gifts which the author's friends have long known, and which they desire others to share. So I bid God speed to you, little book,— you who, after all, are more than a dream book and who surely will find a friendly welcome from those who have had dream books of their own.

CHARLES H. BRENT.

SS. EMPRESS OF INDIA,
Pacific Ocean,
11 July, 1917.

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A VOICE FROM THE SILENCE

TO AN UNPUBLISHED BOOK

No, little Book! I have dreamed your birth,
  But you may not come while I live to know:
Suppose I should chance to be going forth
  Into unknown space when you come in so!
O little Book, what a mockery,
  Should you come to the graveyard to seek
    for me!

You may make me famous! But what of
    that!
  I shall be so glad all the world to leave.
And what you may win me I shall not care;
  Nor for your failure may I grieve!
Yet, little Book, it were sad to creep
Alone to this strange world, and I — asleep!

Little Dream-Book! But the world is cold,
  And it may have nothing but scorn for you;
Perhaps it were best that you should not come
  Unless God gives you a mission to do.
Say, little Book, do you think it would be
Best, in the Dream-land, to sleep on with me?

GRACE

God bless thee! Thou whose hand so often
lifteth
The veil of trouble from my darkened sight!
Naught can I bring in turn but trustful lov-
ing:
God bless thee wheresoe'er thou art tonight.

Over the burden that is ever pressing
Upon my soul, which shrinks before the years,
Thy words of tender hope and love eternal
Calm all the restlessness of grief and fears.

And I — my voice has grown so often weary
Crying to God upon His hills of light —
Can only say, with quivering lips, pain-gifted,
God bless thee wheresoe'er thou art tonight!

... the new joy of something that to their
hearts spring.

Ye whisper of joy, and of love, and good
fortune;
Ye breathe of success that is drawing so
near;
Of bright days returning; of loneliness scat-
tered;
But ye have no word for me,— signals of
cheer!

COUNTING OFF THE DAISY

We walked within the daisy-field.
The summer sky hung o'er us,
And just below there sounded clear
The laughing brooklet's chorus.

She had a sunflower in her hand —
I twirled in mine a clover —
And by her side there gravely stalked
Her most devoted " Rover."

I stooped and plucked a tell-tale bloom;
The air around was hazy;
But still I'm sure she blushed when I
Had counted off the daisy.

EMILY

I WALKED along the quiet street;
I passed a spot, where — glad and free —
So long ago — oh, long ago! —
With happy heart played Emily!

And oh! there rose before my eyes
A child-face I alone could see
As on I passed, with swelling heart,
Where just beyond lies Emily.

Why should I cry that they have hid
My darling's tender face from me,
When well I know that far above
God's glory shines on Emily?

Because that glory so divine,
Beyond the sun, I cannot see,
I only feel that she is gone
And I am lonely — Emily!

MY POET

Roll up, O waves, along the shore;
  Sound, mocking voices of the air;
And echo, surges, with your roar
  The songs that ring forever there!

The songs that he alone could wake
  Who sleeps in silence far away
Beyond the melody you make:
  He sang to you but yesterday!

He sang your madd'ning music o'er,
  While you took up the echoing strain,
And ringing all along the shore,
  Died out in throbbing notes of pain.

Sing on alone, O sobbing wave!
  You mock no more the voice that thrilled;
Oh! green the grass above the grave
  Where grief and pain are lying, stilled.

A BIRTHDAY GREETING

ANOTHER milestone on life's journey passed:
Another year begun!
So much to count of what was gathered up —
Of what was lost or won!

The holy touch of sorrow did but show
The Father's tender love,
E'en as the evening star resplendent glows
Through rifts of cloud above.

And now another year with wistful eyes
Before you, waiting, stands,
Holding the tasks the Master plans to lay
Within your patient hands.

And thus you stand on life's diverging paths
In steadfast faith and true,
With tender yearning for the fading year,
But strong to face the new.

MOTHER

Oh, how the days went glad and free
In that old town beside the sea,
When she was here to bless!
The summer sky was clear and blue,
The blooms were all of rarest hue,
To live was happiness!

But once there came a summer day
When, smiling still, she passed away
From out this world of fears.
Then, oh! the earth was not so sweet;
The flowers lay withered at our feet;
The light had gone that was complete —
Drenched in a rain of tears!

IN MEMORIAM

All softly the gates swung open
That a soul might enter in,
Who had come from the world of mortals —
A world of sorrow and sin.

And the soul of the one who entered
Through the gates of the Shining Light
Was fair in the Master's vision
As she stood in her robes of white.

He had heard her songs through the spaces;
He knew she was sweet and fair;
So He called her unto His palace,
For He wanted His loved one there.

Oh! the Master counts His treasures
As a miser counts his store,
And we may not keep them from Him
When He opens the Secret Door!

A PICTURE

A WOMAN sits beside a window dim,
  While stealthy shadows, creeping,
Shroud her within their soft folds, one by one,
  And hide her weeping.

A young face, yet the touch of sorrow's hand
  Across the forehead rifteth
Its smoothness fair, while o'er the dark-hued
      locks
  The age-snow drifteth.

She sits in silence with the night around,
  Alone in that vast city!
She has lost faith, forgotten love, but seeks
  The Lord's great pity.

SONG

RIDING through the cloud-mist in the early morning,
While all the air is fragrant with the breath of June,
All the summer flowers in the hedgerows nodding,
And all the birds and all the bees with all the world a-tune;

Riding through the cloud-mist in the early morning,
Down the lane and through the fields singing as we go,—
Four of us together through the haze a-breaking
Until the sun lifts up the veil and sets the world aglow.

Riding through the twilight in the early gloaming,
Just a few stars shining high above the trees,
All the flower fairies dancing in the hedgerows
Or swinging on the branches as they waver in the breeze;

Riding through the gloaming while the shadows deepen,
All the air a-humming to the drowsy world,
Till the moon in splendor bursts the charms that bind her,
And downward through retreating clouds her shafts of light are hurled;

Riding through the cloud-mist, merry lads and lasses
Think there is no deeper haze to hide their sun away;
Riding through the gloaming, sober lads and lasses
Wish there were no ending to the ringing, singing day.

BEFORE THE TOMB

HERE in God's peace she lies,
Death-misted hazel eyes
Closed in fast sleep.
See how the sunbeams fair
Shine o'er her brow and hair;
Crossed her cold hands in prayer,
Well may ye weep!

She is so young to lay
In the dark grave away!
Oh, Death is King today!
Hush! and be still.
Close the lid over her,
Let the grass cover her,—
This is God's will.

EQUAL AT LAST

COME and stand with me beside her;
Just a few short months ago
She and I were talking softly,
Sitting in the afterglow.

And we pondered on the beauty
Of the world so far above;
And we wondered if the angels —
Filled with pity and with love —

Ever left the Golden City,
Walked beside the path of man,
Gently smoothing, gently turning
All the destinies that ran.

Now she lies here, white and silent,
All her questions answered now;
All the peace of Christ and heaven
Stamped upon her face and brow.

Yes, I know, the self-same story,
That "My loss is all her gain."
Others, too, have preached the sermon,
But it does not ease my pain.

Aye, she bore full oft, and bravely,
Burdens that I could not see,

While she gave me all the sunlight
Of her soul's serenity.

Now the great God giveth, justly,
To my life the bitter loss;
All to her the crown of glory,
All to me the heavier cross.

ALONE

Said a maid, my fortune telling,
Long ago in days of old:
" Never heart shall ache for you,
Never heart shall break for you,
Though grief strike your soul with anguish
Or you lie beneath the mold."

Someone near me kissed me softly,
" Heed it not, dear heart! " she said,
" Fate or fortune, who can know it?
Or the future, who can show it?
Mind you not the idle talking
Of a foolish gypsy maid! "

And I said — my soul unfearing —
All my blessings unforgot,
" It were well I gave no sorrow,
From that thought my strength I'll borrow;
I should be content, my darling,
Other lives to darken not! "

But, ah me! the thought is dreary,
Musing by myself tonight:
" All alone! " the words keep measure;
Gone is all the old-time pleasure;
I can see but sweet, dead faces
Upward turning to the light.

What the wonder! What the wonder!
That my soul is numb and cold —
" Never heart shall ache for me,
Never heart shall break for me,
Though grief strike my soul with anguish
Or I lie beneath the mold! "

SONG

With the strength of the hills around her,
My love that is mine, I found her;
And close to my heart I bound her,
And shall hold her there alway!
. . . . . .
I rode from the sea to the mighty hills
'Mid the forest-shades, with their mocking rills;
And, as I rode through the woodland glade,
I found and won my blue-eyed maid;
The maid of all maids for me,
Far from the throbbing sea.

We've built us a cot in the forest-glade;
And we roam the upland in sun and shade —
Far from the rock-bound, sea-pressed shore —
And we hark in the night when the storm-winds roar
In their sullen rage through the mighty wood,
Thrashing the trees in their angry mood.

But I long for the sweep of the ocean vast,
For the sound of the sea-king's trumpet-blast,
As he thunders to heaven his wrathful shout
And lashes the waves into maddening rout.

Shall we two go thence — to the tossing
sea —
Away from the forest wild and free?

She answers not, and she does not care;
Wherever my heart, my home she'll share.
We will leave the woods and the mighty hills,
The quiet frolic of laughing rills;
I will teach her the magic of ocean lore;
We will gather its treasures along the shore.
As she knew the strength of the hills of God,
She will know the might of the ocean broad.

. . . . . .

With the strength of the hills around her,
My love that is mine, I found her;
And close to my heart I bound her,
And shall hold her there alway!

IN MEMORIAM

She had bade goodby, and stood at the door;
We had parted for all earth's years.
We bravely smiled in that mute farewell,
But my eyes were dim with tears.

She had said, "I go to that convent now
Where I have so longed to be,
And soon I shall know if I heard aright,
And our dear Lord called to me."

She was glad to go, and I would not mar
Her joy by a selfish word;
I knew her spirit no error made,
'Twas the Master's voice she heard.

I have seen her since, in her habit dark,
A woman of sweetest grace,
Bearing the seal of the Holy Maid,
And light divine on her face.

Now the Master's voice she has heard again,
And, thrilled with a pure delight,
She crossed her hands on her gentle breast
And entered the Court of Light.

Oh, the Master loveth to claim His own,
To us, this treasure given
Of a wondrous pearl in memory's chain,
And a saint we know in Heaven!

THE MYSTIC GIFT

To the Celebrant of the Eucharist

I CANNOT sing the dear songs
I sung in childhood days:
God raised His hand for silence,
And hushed were song and praise.

I cannot hear the message
You tell the rest. You see,
God locked me in the stillness
And holds the chamber's key.

I cannot see with clearness
The Altar's lovely glow:
God drew His hand across my eyes,
But why, I do not know.

He says that YOU will give me
A message of delight,
A music soft and tender,
A vision strong and bright.

Do you ask me HOW that marvel
You can give to me to-day?
It is when the sacred wonder
Within my hand you lay.

And my soul shall stir with promise —
As a seed beneath the sod —
When you hold for me the Chalice
Of the Living Grapes of God.

A CHRISTMAS WATCH

"SLEEP, little sister," a child-voice is singing,
"Sleep, though the cold and darkness are here;
Soon dawns the brightness of morn in its splendor.
For the birth of the Christ-Child, so holy and dear.

"Bitter the night, and no food have we taken
For long, weary hours; but God in His love
Will soon send us hope, for the dawn of the morrow
Brings Christ in His glory to earth from above.

"Mamma has gone to the hospital yonder;
Sleep, little sister, I'll watch by the bed."
(Cold is the babe in the silence so dreary,
And white is its face, for the baby is dead.)

"Sleep, little sister" (the small watcher singeth
Unconscious that death has drawn, pitying, near.)

" Sleep, little sister " (the child-voice is sobbing)
" Sleep; the night passes, the Christ-dawn is here! "

HER ANSWER

"What will you do! How can you live!
Now Hope and Joy and Love have fled?"

She bowed her face upon her hands:
"Thank God! I still have Faith," she said.

WAITING

" PEACE on earth, good will to men! "
(Is the message living still?)
Long ago the angels sang;
Through the world the cadence rang:
Does it now as then?

Ah! good will seems far away,—
So fierce the strife of men:
Has the Light resplendent failed
Which the gentle shepherds hailed
That first Christmas Day?

" Peace on earth " is waiting long;
Yet man's undaunted Faith
Hears afar a triumph strain,
Grander than the earth's refrain,
Christ's own victor song.

GOOD FRIDAY

Lo! the shadow falleth over,
Gleams the fitful lightning's glow;
Here and there the rocks are riven
While the earth sways to and fro.

Darker, denser grows the shadow
While the throng is hushed and still,
Trembling, wondering, fearing, gazing
At the Cross on Calvary's Hill.

Long ago that Cross was lifted
Dark against the Eastern sky;
Long ago a jeering people
Watched the great Redeemer die.

Still the world looks down the ages;
Human pain and sin and woe
Gather where the Cross is standing,
And the Master boweth low.

AN EASTER MESSAGE

In the peace of the Lenten season,
In the glow of the western sun,
I sat in a silence holy
When the day was almost done.

My soul went forth to the absent,
Loved friends who are leal and true;
And I asked for a wondrous blessing
When my memory folded you.

I did not ask for a treasure
That my unwise heart might name,
But just what the dear Lord's wisdom
And His deeper love should frame.

The evening's dusk fell o'er me
As I sat in my musing here,
And softly the shadows gathered
Nearer, and yet more near.

But oh! the tender blending
Of the gray and the azure hue,
While the night grew calm and holy,
And still I thought of you.

'Twas beautiful all above me,
And while I watched the skies

A golden beam crept gently
Athwart my lifted eyes.

Majestic through the vapor
The still moon held her sway,
And I prayed that just as calmly
You should hold your God-set way.

It may be storms will gather
About your pathway, dear;
But the Hand that guards the planets
Will keep your soul from fear.

Sweet as the fragrant lilies,
Calm as the stars above,
Bright as the golden sunset,
Strong in the Master's love!

Thus do I see you ever
With a light around you thrown,—
The light of a faithful spirit
The great God calls His own!

I thought of a morning early
That was sacred and sweet and rare,
The morn of the Incarnation
When we knelt at an Altar fair.

The feast of the Resurrection
Is drawing softly near,

And the glory of that message
Is floating wide and clear.

May some mystic song of gladness
Chant within your heart to-day;
And the best God's love can send you
Is the gift for which I pray.

ST. MICHAEL'S DAY

Soft and clear the lights were burning;
Sweet the sound of praise and prayer
As we knelt before the Altar,
With the great St. Michael there!

Friend of mine, who knelt beside me,
Tenderly your hand has led
My uncertain steps, that falter
Where the shadows round me spread.

Strong the prayer my spirit uttered
For God's love to fold you, dear,
For the great Saint Michael's power
To protect from evil near.

Oh, the splendor of Saint Michael!
How we love him — you and I!
"Like to God" his name proclaimeth,
Angel-warrior of the High!

So, within that name beloved
Did I fold your own today,
As before the lighted Altar
Knelt we, side by side, to pray.

Round about my life your friendship
Folds its gentle, kindly care;
And my heart responds, all-grateful
For the touch of sweetness rare.

Small the tribute I can offer, —
Unto you my heart to prove, —
Humble prayers, to God ascending,
Witness of a woman's love!

ALL SAINTS' EVE

Close fast the door, turn down the light,
And sit in holy silence there;
The souls of those we know and love
Shall come from Paradise tonight!

Oh! deep the joy that thrills us now,
As o'er the floor they swiftly glide,
And, fresh from that all-radiant Land,
Press gladly, softly to our side!

They come, caress, and, blessing, pass,
While whispers low of deathless love
Reach to our souls and seem to show
The glory of that Life above.

And we who feel their presence thus
All-sacred from that Land of Rest,
We breathe the air of Paradise
And know that we indeed are blest!

OUT OF THE SHADOW

OUT from the pain and the shadow
Which foldeth the children of woe,
Thou hast entered the radiant splendor
That only the sanctified know.

Thou hadst walked in Love's garden of gladness
And found that the blossoms were sweet;
And thou walked through the valley of sorrow
Where the pathway was rough to thy feet.

Thou didst drink of the wine-cup of anguish
That the Master had filled to the brim,
Because it is ever His dearest
That he bids share the pain-draught with Him.

But now He hath broken the chalice,
And the wine that was bitter is spilled,
While the founts where thy Soul drinketh freely
With the "waters of healing" are filled.

Oh! thy "way of the cross," it was holy!
Thou didst strengthen thy soul with the Word!
More splendid thine Easter than ours,
For thou seest the face of the Lord!

A MOTHER'S SLUMBER SONG

SLEEP, my little one, sleep —
Narrow thy bed and deep.
Neither hunger nor thirst nor pain
Can touch or hurt thee e'er again;
I, thy mother, will sit and sing
As I watch thee, calmly slumbering.
Sleep, my little one, sleep!

Sleep, my little one, sleep —
Narrow thy bed and deep.
Soon in thy Angel's tender arms,
Closely sheltered from earth's alarms,
Thou wilt awaken, baby mine,
Where all is mercy and love divine.
Sleep, my little one, sleep!

Sleep, my little one, sleep —
Narrow thy bed and deep.
I have wept till my heart is dry;
But now I smile as I see thee lie
With small hands crossed in death's mute prayer,
Never to reach in the wild despair
Of hunger's anguish. All is o'er!
I wept, but now I can weep no more.
Sleep, my little one, sleep!

Sleep, my little one, sleep —
Narrow thy bed and deep.
A little while — I, too, shall rest
Close by the side of my baby blest.
Safe is my babe, earth's anguish done;
Safe at the feet of the Holy One.
Sleep, my little one, sleep!

FOR THE LONELY

Spiritual Communion

LORD! Lord! I plead for all, who, like to me,
Are kneeling lonely far from Church or
priest;
We have no altar, save Thy love divine,
Nor have we share in that all wondrous
feast.

Yet, leave us not bereft, dear Lord! I pray;
Within the corners where Thy love is known
Raise Thou an Altar that our souls may see,
So shall we feel that we are not alone.

No, not alone, dear Lord, if Thou art here,
If Thou wilt be both Sacrifice and Priest;
And Thou Thyself, the absolution give!
Oh, wondrous mercy! and oh, wondrous
feast.

We raise to Thee the lonely, broken prayer
We feed on Thee in spirit, hearing naught
Of music, trembling through the dim-aisled
Church;
But Thou art with us, as Thy Truth hath
taught.

Across the lighted hall you show
  My mother's face to me
Within a room whose windows wide
  Look out upon the sea.

The young moon peeps between the panes
  Upon her slender hands
And kisses tenderly a form
  That there beside her stands.

The group I love grows wider now —
  All, all are gathered there!
My father grave, my sister sweet,
  My brothers tall and fair.

Oh, once again to feel the hands
  Clasp mine in love of old!
Oh, once again to press the lips
  That now are dumb and cold!

Pass on, O Time, and bring me there
  To where they wait above!
It must be sweet, it *must* be sweet,
  In that far Land of Love.

Oh, hush, my heart! I would be calm;
No grief must reign in sight;
Blow past, O wind of memory!
I must not cry tonight!

HYMN OF DEATH

MORTALS, sing your hymns before him;
Sing the songs of hope and love;
Sing the triumph of the spirit
As it wings its way above;
While before earth's mighty foe
Bow ye low, bow ye low!

Death is lord of life and sorrow;
Wide he opens with his key
Portals of the blest eternal,
Showing all its mystery.
While he hushes human woe,
Bow ye low, bow ye low!

Royal servant of the Triune,
Holding souls in strong embrace;
Grieving for the grief he seeth
On the mourner's stricken face,
Who his glory may not know:
Bow ye low, bow ye low!

Hail him as the prince supernal!
Hand in hand with Christ went he
(Sweeter grace no angel knoweth)
To the Cross on Calvary.
Christ's own glory was his crown,
For the sins of earth weighed down

Death's strong pinions with their woe;
Bow ye low, bow ye low!

Mortals, sing your hymns before him;
Sing the songs of pain and love;
For he smiles away all anguish
As he bears the souls above;
Ye his comfort, too, shall know:
Bow ye low, bow ye low!

HOPE DEAD YET LIVETH

" Did you not have some radiant hope
Of fame, or purpose great, to hold? "
O, asking lips and eager eyes,
What yearning memories you unfold!

Yes, I have had my hope of bliss,
Its dreams of fame and vision wide;
And I have laid that hope away,
Dead in its prime — but glorified.

You lift your wondering eyes to mine;
You cannot understand my thought?
How can a hope be glorified
Whose blossoms never fruitage brought?

No hope that keeps its tryst with God
Can ever really die, I trow,
But lives, transcended to the skies,
With greater strength to thrive and grow.

A hope of purpose fine and pure,
That should adorn a soul with grace,
Must have its setting strong and high:
And mine — it faltered in its place.

And so God took it from my life:
To make it stronger? Who can tell!
I only know the hand that barred
My hope's fulfilment doeth well.

Ah then, what matters! I believe
God keeps my hope in trust. And so
I veiled its still face silently,
And closed the coffin — long ago!

A SONG UNSUNG

I sang you a song long years ago
When my heart was dull with pain;
And now that the burden has lighter grown
I will sing you a song again.

The clouds were so dark when you came to me
And smiled the worst sorrows away,
With a faith that was strong and a love that was true
And a hope that was sweet as May.

Step by step of the passing years
Your soul has strengthened mine,
And the brightness you shed on my darkened path
Is a ray from the Light divine.

The song I would sing is weak and low
That clear and full should ring: —
For I would give you the grandest lay
That ever a bard could sing!

I will lay my heart in the hands of God,
Who knows what its song would be,
And I think He will fashion the words aright
And set them to melody.

And some day, — friend of my heart and
life! —
In a world that is fair and great,
You will know what your life and love have
wrought
For a soul that was desolate.

Oh! my song must wait for that future day
When pure and fine and grand,
It will greet your soul in a grateful praise,
Attuned by the Master's hand!

I SIT IN THE SILENCE GROWING LONELY

I sit in the silence, growing lonely, —
Though closely gather the loved ones all,—
For my grieving spirit seeth only
A vacant chair where the shadows fall!

We passed so far through the vale of sorrow;
We waited long for the clouds to lift;
And now she welcomes a fairer morrow
While we see the darker shadows drift.

Did she know I kissed her brow, I wonder,
When she lay so royally at rest?
Are ever heard, in the City yonder,
The cries of those they have loved the best?

I know her blest but I miss her ever,—
At morn, at noon, and at evening, too;
But I know somewhere in the vast Forever,
She will clasp me close as she used to do!

But I sit in the silence, growing lonely, —
Though closely gather the loved ones all, —
For my grieving spirit seeth only
A vacant chair where the shadows fall!

STORM-TOSSED

O DOVE, spread your fair, wide pinions;
Fly fast o'er the tossing sea;
Seek not to rest on the foaming crest
Of the billows, wild and free!

The snow on your wings lies heavy,
But speed through the driving spray!
The sea-king's smile is a ghastly wile
When he and Death are at play.

O dove, spread your fair, wide pinions;
Lift your eyes, so dim with foam;
See, clear and far, o'er the harbor bar
Shine the welcome-lights of home!

Fly on, though the storm grow wilder
And beats on your panting breast;
One struggle more, you will gain the shore,
And beyond the wave is rest.

OUT OF THE SILENCE

"The song of bird and bee,
The chorus of the breezes, streams and groves,
All the grand music to which Nature moves,
Are wasted melody
To her. The world of sound a tuneless void,
While even silence hath its charm destroyed."
— FROM "THE DUMB CHILD."

ALONE in all my solitude and dread,
I think upon the years that are to be
Of silence — deep as that about the dead —
Which God hath bidden to encompass me.

I think of all my hopes, the aims and fears
That I have laid down slowly one by one,
To drink the cup God gave, with bitter tears,
Till my poor heart could say, "Thy will be done."

I have grown patient through these years of pain,
And wait the power that shall summon me
Out of the silence into sound again,
When Jesus breaks the chain and sets me free.

And the first sound that enters to my ear
Shall be the voice of Him whom most I love —
There shall He melt the seal and bid me hear
And join with angels in the songs above.

A VOICE THROUGH THE SILENCE

I SAT within the church so dim and calm,
And watched the people, in their grave content,
Listening, each with eager face upturned,
To hear the message sent.

But through the silence deep that pressed me close,
No word of comfort on my spirit broke;
Not e'en for me the anthems swelling round
The solemn silence woke.

I turned half heart-sick towards the Altar there;
I stood alone the while the throng passed by;
Then from my heart to God in all its pain
Went up a bitter cry.

He heard and answered. On my heart there fell
Peace — like the benediction after prayer —
While to my soul the Voice Eternal spoke
A message sweet and rare.

I raised my head; a rush of gladness thrilled
My being through! Content at last, I trod
With slow steps down the dim aisle, while my heart
Bowed with the love of God!

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND

THERE is a beautiful story
They tell in a far-off land
To the wondering, wide-eyed children,
Who close to the mother stand.

She tells them that on this even
Of the marvelous Christ-child's birth
A band of the shining seraphs
Come down to the waiting earth.

The Christ-child leads them softly
Through cottage and stately hall,
And peace and love reign sweetly
Wherever their footsteps fall.

They pause at the side of mourning
And where pain rules at will,
And the Christ-child bids the sorrow cease
And the anguish throb be still.

Their hands are filled with tokens
For the rich and poor as well,
And they smile as they think of Christmas joys
That in each home shall dwell.

On the bells of the Christ-tide sounding
So merrily far and wide,

The hand of a seraph reaches out
And touches each throbbing side.

And that is the reason, truly,
The Christ-chimes ring so sweet,
While people, wondering, listen
As they pause below in the street.

This is the story olden
They tell to the children dear,
As the Christmas-tree is lighted
And the Christ-child draweth near.

THE CHRISTMAS "ALL HAIL!"

In the holy peace of the Christmas morning
The Altar is gleaming, high and white,
With fragrant flowers its charms adorning,
And the starry glow of its candle-light.

The vicar kneels in the golden glory,
His heart with the joy of the Christ-tide filled,
As his thoughts go back to the olden story
When humble shepherds with wonder thrilled.

He lifts his eyes to the Altar's splendor,
Its lights, its beauty and fragrance rare,
And the deepest love that his soul can render
Upflames to an unseen Presence there.

He seems to see in a vision holy
(Like dear St. Francis of long ago)
The sacred Child in the manger lowly
Of Bethlehem's stable dim and low.

In the shadowy Church are the people kneeling,
And the little children he loves so well
Gaze at the Altar, their child-hearts feeling
The gladness and awe of the Mystic Spell.

. . . . . .

O guide of the people kneeling lowly!
O shepherd true of the lambs of God!
Can you hear, in spirit, the footsteps holy
Of Him who once by the Jordan trod?

He enters the Church with its Christmas splendor;
He draweth close to you, kneeling there;
His dear hands are folding, — strong and tender, —
About your own that are clasped in prayer.

Ah, Priest beloved! to you we're bringing
Our Christmas blessings and ALL-TIME love;
But the song supreme — do you hear it ringing?
Is the soft "All hail!" from the Host above.

THE IMMORTAL JEWEL

(A Valentine)

UPON Life's mystic ocean,
A ship of wonder sails;
She bears strange unseen cargo,
And falters not for gales.

The greatest of her treasures
Is a jewel, pure and white,
With a star-like radiance glowing,
A never fading light.

And this gem with heart of fire
Bears the holy name of Love;
It was fashioned by a Spirit
And blest by God above.

This gem I hold as others,—
You clasp its likeness too!
You give me of its rushing light
As I, of mine, give you.

'Tis a wondrous thing, this jewel:
A circlet all-divine
That binds the world of mortals
In a heart-to-heart entwine.

Ah! mine shall fold you ever
Till my last fleeting breath,
Then grow to stronger brightness
In Life that follows death!

CUBA

1898

FAR across the tossing waters,
Where the sunshine loves to rest,
Lies a little island, panting
With the wolf-hound at her breast.

Fierce and bitterly she struggled
In the years of long ago;
Now, once more, she seeks the fetters
From her writhing limbs to throw.

Who will conquer? Which is stronger,
Passion's pain or Evil's might?
With the blood-bath of the children
Spain is blinding her own sight.

Courage! Courage! In the distance,
Cuba MIA, you may see —
Moving softly, waving boldly —
Blood-bought banners of the free.

Let the screams of child and woman,
Tortured, helpless, filled with woe,
Nerve your arm to strike with sureness,
Pulse your hand to drive the blow!

Cuba! Cuba! Rise in greatness!
Falter not, nor yield the sword;

Child-lips, pale in death's red horror,
Mutely speak the accusing word.

Outraged women plead in silence —
Silence worse than threat or tears,
For it calls on God to witness
All the shame of anguished years.

Who will conquer? Which is stronger,
Passion's pain or Evil's might?
May God's arm, enfolding Cuba,
Win the victory for her right!

THE CALL OF FREEDOM

1917

Once more at the call of Freedom,
We have entered the lists today
Of a world's stupendous tourney,
To hurl back a tyrant's sway.

Unfurl the starry banner!
Let her folds wave to the breeze.
How her colors will flash through the war-smoke
And over the startled seas!

Ho, England! We're now your ally
Who had fought you long ago!
We are one at last in the struggle
Against a blood-curst foe.

Ah, God! We pray You to guide us
With a strong and steadfast might,
As ever You guide defenders
Against a ruthless blight.

Fling forth, O flag of Freedom,
Your colors to the sky!
Never was greater message
Than that your white stars cry!

Now may St. Michael lead us! —
That Angel of the Sword,

Who led of old the legions
At God's commanding word.

Yea, as the strife we enter —
Great Freedom's life to spare —
Be with us, God of battles,
And bless the flag we bear!

WHO IS THE KAISER'S GOD?

THERE came a voice from across the world;
"I have heard," it said with a shout,
"That God has appointed me Lord of War,
His scourge — of slaughter and rout!

"My kingdom shall reach to the north and south,
And far unto east and west;
And nations shall bow to my sovereign rule
And yield unto my behest."

Then he worked in secret the long days through
To win his blood-bought prize,
Until he was ready to rise and flare
His crimson trail through the skies.

O'er smiling valleys and peaceful hills
His legions of blight he led;
He stained a continent dark with blood,
And filled the sea with dead.

And all the while he cried aloud,
"Lo! I am the arm of might
That the Lord of Hosts has appointed now
To set a wrong world right!"

I am not wise in the ways of God,
As the Kaiser claims to be,
But I wonder much if the voice he heard
Was that which set Israel free!

I know that the world all-erring is,
And needeth the chastening rod;
But tell me, Priest of the Lord of Life,
WHO is the Kaiser's God?

O GALLANT KING OF BELGIUM

O gallant King of Belgium,
The world is yours to-day!
Thousands of hearts, in nations wide,
For you both work and pray.

Your dauntless courage faltered not
To face a countless horde;
Your hand but laid the sceptre down
To take Protection's sword.

It was not for your throne alone,
Nor for your people's good,
But you and they another's guard
As brave defenders stood.

O gallant King of Belgium!
Your country — blood-bespread —
Is greater far than e'er before
By all its sacred dead.

We cannot see the end of all,
But this we feel must rise —
A flaming sword of righteousness
Athwart the darkened skies.

A day must come for Belgium
When victory shall stand,

And silently the vanquished foe
Will leave your grave-filled land.

O gallant king of Belgium,
Take,— as your crown to-day,—
The homage that our hearts contain
And thrill the prayer we say.

THE HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN

All softly the door glides open,
And the wan, pale faces smile
With a glad expectant welcome,
As they see the form in the aisle.

Oh, the firm, kind hand that strengthens!
The voice that gives hopeful cheer!
The look of sympathy shining
In eyes that are steadfast and clear!

What else in our human mission
So like the Master's work?
Comforting those who are pain-struck,
Or banishing fears that may lurk.

In hearts that know on the morrow
A terrible ordeal stands,
With a faint, uncertain issue
In its dim and shuddering hands.

Across the path of the Chaplain
Lies many a branch of care,
And often, with Cross uplifted,
He must guide some soul from despair.

Still, on the path of the Chaplain
Falleth a radiant light;
The comfort and strength he giveth
Shines out like a star in the night.

The angel of earth has seen it,
Encircled by hope and love,
And hands it — tenderly glowing —
To the angel who stands above.

Sweet o'er the way of the Chaplain
Is sounding a wondrous song,
Rising from hearts he has brightened
And souls he has blessed and made strong.

The angel of earth doth hear it,
That song like a sweet-toned bell,
While angels beyond repeat it —
The heavenly Chorus to swell.

Ah, the life of the hospital Chaplain
Is blessed,— though toilsome the days,—
And the Christ, Who walks ever beside him,
Folds His hands in His own when he prays.

Farewell! Towards those far-off stranger
people
Your ship has turned her prow.
Farewell! farewell! May God's most ten-
der blessing
Descend upon you now!

You bear with you across the stormy waters
Our love, our prayers, our cheers.
We yield you up in gladness for the Mas-
ter —
E'en though it be with tears!

Proud in our love, though so bereft and
lonely,
That He hath chosen you.
Our Chief! — the name I gave in merry
fondness —
So earnest-souled and true!

"Our Chief!" The name its nobler
meaning beareth:
One of God's chosen braves,—
Strong to uphold, to guide, to help and
strengthen;
Firm in the faith that saves!

Across the glory of the sunset's splendor
Flashes a crimson flame;

So shall Remembrance, in the hearts that
own you,
Hold, as its crown, your name.

But not as transient as the crimson gleaming
Shall that remembrance stand;
Forever and forever will we keep you
The Chieftain of our band.

Farewell! farewell! God's sacred Presence
with you
Through all your toilsome years!
We stand undaunted, though with misted
vision,
And watch you pass — with cheers.

"Turn back! turn back! Will Ronaldson,
The fires of hell are loose;
They rage across the waste beyond
And down the big White Moose.

"Turn back! turn back! Will Ronaldson,
No man can face the wall,—
The wall of living, lurid flame
That holds the place in thrall.

"And will you go, Will Ronaldson?
And what can you do there?
Think of your wife, Will Ronaldson!
Think of your baby fair!"

"I think of them, but just beyond
A woman lies in woe
Who sent for me; and come what will,
My duty is to go."

"What though a woman need your skill,
She yet is nearer death;
And long before you reach her side
The flames may still her breath."

"Greater the need, the louder call!
I hear and I obey;

In God alone I hope for strength
To win the fight today."

"God give you grace, Will Ronaldson!
And we'll prepare your wife
To face the worst that death can give:
The hopelessness of life!"

His horse leaped down, he turned again,
And back the answer threw:
"Nay, she will trust in God," rang out,
"My wife is brave and true!"

Divinest faith! divinest love!
With fearlessness enwrought:
The fearlessness that courage gives
Born of divinest thought!

. . . . . .

He found the woman lying calm
A lifeless babe beside,
Looking expectant towards the way
Which death was opening wide.

The flames lit up the sky afar;
He knew what should be done;
He turned, then gave a gasping cry:
His frightened steed was gone!

Not e'en a moment to be lost,
The flames were driving fast;

Quickly he raised her to his back
And rushed before the blast.

She raised her head and whispered faint,
"My child!" in love's despair.
"Your child is safe — in death," he said;
She murmured low a prayer!

Three weary miles with flames behind
He pressed a race with death,
While Godward went a prayer for help
With every panting breath.

He hears the lake, he feels the air,
On sudden, closer grow;
A dense, black cloud of smoke upcoils
Above a lurid glow.

God give you strength, Will Ronaldson,
Your triumph-goal to make!
And will you fail, Will Ronaldson,
Before you reach the lake?

He looked to where the waters blue
Touched the smoke-blackened sod;
He spoke no word, but from his heart
Went one wild prayer to God.

And with that prayer new strength was gained;
He saw a waving hand

Within a boat fast rowing near
Towards the flame-girt strand.

One deep, long breath he drew, and then
Plunged forward on his way,
Nor passed, nor swerved, till at his feet
The sparkling waters lay.

Dimly he felt a grasp of hands,
The burden that he bore
Quickly and gently raised, and then,
Fainting, he knew no more.

No man is nearer God's great heart
Than he, what'er his creed,
Who risks life, love and all, to fill
A helpless woman's need.

Where the tide comes up and the tide goes
down,
And the noon-sun swings o'erhead,
Where the sea-gulls circle the whole day
long,
Comes Olla with stately tread.

He looks to the north and he looks to the
south,
And long looks he to the west,
While his good right hand on the jewelled
hilt
Of his trusty sword doth rest.

"Come hither, come hither, my little foot-
page!
Oh, come thou hither to me:
Dost thou see the city that gleameth yon
Where the cliffs lean down to the sea?

"A purse of gold and a princely rank
Are thine if thou darest to go
And count the sentries who guard the place
Where the strong tides ebb and flow.

"But the danger is great. Dost fear, my
boy,
For my foes would know thee well."

Oh, proudly the little foot-page looked up,
While his child-breast rose and fell.

"Nay, I fear no ill, and I dare to go
Wherever great Olla sends;
And I'll bring thee news ere the fleeing Day
Her robe on the mountain rends."

Great Olla held him fast and long,
While he looked far, far above;
Then he whispered low, "Go, bold my boy,
In the strength of Count Olla's love."

Where the tide comes up, and the tide goes down,
And the great sun burneth low,
To the dark browed chief, 'mong his armed men,
Comes the page with footsteps slow.

"Haste hither, haste hither, my little foot-page,
Oh, haste thou hither to me."
There was blood on the breast of the little foot-page
As he sank on his bended knee.

And the grievous stain Count Olla saw,
And he laid his clenched sword-hand,

While his brow grew dark as the midnight
gloom.
On the crimson tainted hand.

" Oh, bide thou awhile ere thou sayest aught,
And list, Count Olla, to me.
Twelve sentries I counted who guard the
place
Where the cliffs lean down to the sea.

" The soldiers are drunk with the blood-red
wine
That flows from the vintage wide;
And they swear they will conquer thee, great
chief,
Ere the morrow's turn of tide.

" But while I was watching the revel there,
One of the sentinels bold
Saw me, and knew I was of thy band
By my girdle — blue and gold.

" And oh, I had thought I must die ere now,
Before I had reached thy side."
And, drooping slowly, the little foot-page
Sobbed once, sobbed twice, and died.

There are sounds of fear through the live-
long night,
Till the pale moon swoons o'erhead;

And the waves which break with a snow-
white crest
Are dyed with a boding red.

"Bring hither, bring hither, my little foot-
page,
Oh, bring him hither to me,
And lay him here in my stiffening arms,
With his dead face fair to see.

"There's a crimson glow in the far-off east,
And the ground is crimson, too;
There was work well done in the moonlit
night —
A night that my foemen rue.

"There's a carven vault near the cliff so
grand,
Which was built for a prince, I ween;
There lay us — my little foot-page and
me —
And leave not a space between.

"And tell his mother, when back ye go
To the land far, far away,—
The land where the great palm waveth free
And our young babes, lisping, pray,—

"Ay, tell his mother, the beauteous one,
The loved one and the blest,

That he slumbers here in a princely tomb,
And close to Count Olla's breast."

While the tide comes up and the tide goes down,
And the wild gulls circle free,
The page and great Olla sleep sound, sleep deep,
Where the cliffs lean down to the sea.

SEPARATION

Do you remember the old-time place,
In an old-time town by the restless sea?
You remember the faces loved and lost —
Now buried forever from you and me?

Do you remember the hopes we had,
The plans we made and the prayers we said?
How we set the song to its sweetest note,
And how bright was the page of life we read?

The prayers I prayed are unanswered yet;
The music is set to a minor tune;
And the page I thought was so plain to see
Is covered over with mystic rune.

Well, go your way! I will journey mine;
But I pray you think, at some set of sun,
Of the old-time love in the old-time place,
Of the hope and the joy forever done.

PAST AND PRESENT

Oh, the old days, the old days!
How bright the sunlight fell
Across the hills and river,
And glimmered through the dell!
How we played beneath the great trees
And shouted in the hall,
Or listened in the even
To hear the tree-toads call.

Oh, the old days, the old days!
The love and cheers that blest
The dear old home beneath the trees —
That seemed of earth the best.
The loving hands, the tender eyes,
The hearts of worth untold
Of the nearest ones, the dearest ones,
Who smiled in days of old.

The home is gone; those days are past;
The ones who made them sweet —
Have left me here to tread the way
Alone with stumbling feet.
Alone? Ah, no! I feel them near,
And closer still they come
When memories cluster, fair and bright,
Around the dear old home.

These later days that fill my life
O'erflow with peace and calm,

For gentle hearts have gathered near
And brought their tender balm;
The troubled sea of grief and pain
Their love has stilled to rest;
And so the present and the past
Co-mingle and are blest.

Oh, the old days, the old days!
How sweet they are to view!
And the present days, how beautiful
With love so rare and true!
I lift my spirit Godward
And know His wisdom vast
As I hold the wondrous present
And see the haloed past.

Oh, the glorious days of the long ago
In the summer of splendid youth,
When the little birds sang high and clear,
And all my circle of loved ones near,
And I knew not wrong nor truth.
Oh, sweet were the joys in the home I knew,
And great were its treasures rare;
But one by one they glided away
To a land where all the beloved stray,
For the great God called them there.

And now I walk in the quiet ways,
And dream of a time to be
When wondering rapture shall be my own,
As clouds and silence are backward thrown,
When the great God sends for me!

EVENTIME

("At eventime it shall be light")

SOFT and sweet the day is closing,
And the western sky, aglow,
Draws my soul in tender yearning
To the time of long ago.

Happy memories are thronging
As I sit in silence here;
All forgotten are the sorrows
As the past is drawing near.

Soft and low there echoes faintly
Just the music of a hymn
While the twilight shadows cluster
And the light is growing dim.

In the glowing of the sunset,
In the twilight's dusky gleam,
How they come—the loved and vanished—
Like the spectres of a dream!

But I know they come — the old days!
And the ones who made them sweet
Throng about me in the gloaming,
And our spirits know and greet.

Oh, the sweetest, happiest hour
That my soul doth ever know
Bringeth memories, bringeth dear ones
From the years of long ago!

ON AN EASTER-TIDE MARRIAGE

In the light of the Easter glory
  You have entered the mystical way,
Which trends through the wonderful garden
  That is sweetened by Love's firm sway.

Ah! the joy that the Easter marriage
  Bringeth close to your souls, — made
    one, —
Is the thought of your deathless union
  That the Blood of the Lamb hath won.

WHEN THE ROSES DIED

Do you remember when the roses died,
(So long ago we scarce can count the years!)
And whispered, as they passed, a message grim
That brought to our charged hearts a thrill of fears.

Across the sunlight of our lives there crept
A shadow that bespoke a storm of pain;
We dared not look into each other's eyes
Lest we behold our own dread grief-refrain.

Long, long ago that shadow came — and fell;
And then another, and another, too, —
Even as petals from the roses fall
When Death's sad lips their beauty seeks to woo.

But what if roses die? 'Tis not for aye;
And what if loved ones pass beyond our ken?
They enter Gardens where the roses live,
And some day we shall find them all again.

So, in that faith we find serenest peace
As o'er the dull old ways of earth we plod,

Leaving our prayers of love, like deathless
blooms,
To lie, all-fragrant, at the feet of God!

L'ENVOI

In those old days, when life was rich for me,
And tender hearts beat warmly at my side,
I did not know the splendor of it all,
Nor how my life in theirs was satisfied.

Ah, no! I deemed Love's tasks too wearisome;
I always cried to God for that or this,
Seeking for what I did not have or need,
Impatient of the dear caress or kiss.

Until (there was no other way to teach
My rebel-soul that what I held was sweet)
God sent unto my home a Messenger,
Who came with pallid brow and hurried feet.

In sore amaze I felt the love-tasks slip
Softly and swiftly from my careless hold,
And then I found how empty hands could ache
When no dear others reached their own to fold.

So now I sit in quiet loneliness,
Keeping the past in holy memory;
For even he who death to me hath spared —
Is far away — oh! far away from me.

Dear God, I raise to Thee my empty hands,
My lonely heart, my restless, yearning soul.
Can all these tearful years bear fruit for Thee
When naught but selfishness has framed the whole?

I bring the work my trembling hands have wrought;
I bring the songs that Thou hast bade me sing, —
Faltering, pain-struck, every chord and note,
But yet, dear Lord, my love's best offering.

The world may view my work with smile or frown, —
'Twill find, perhaps, too many faded leaves;
I shall not care, for those who loved me most
May breathe a blessing o'er my garnered sheaves!